

OCIR ROLES OF THE REGIONS

EPA executes its mission through an organizational structure that includes Headquarters (HQ) offices in Washington, DC; Research Triangle Park, NC; Cincinnati, OH; other field offices; and 10 Regional offices nationwide. The 10 Regional offices are located in Boston, MA (Region 1), New York, NY (Region 2), Philadelphia, PA (Region 3), Atlanta, GA (Region 4), Chicago, IL (Region 5), Dallas, TX (Region 6), Lenexa, KS (Region 7), Denver, CO (Region 8), San Francisco, CA (Region 9) and Seattle, WA (Region 10). There are also 29 labs across the country¹ that report to either the Office of Research and Development (ORD) or the Region.

Each Region is headed by a political Regional Administrator (RA) and a career Deputy Regional Administrator (DRA). In some Regions there is also an additional political appointee who serves as a Chief of Staff or a Senior Policy Advisor. During an Administration change it is common for some new RA appointments to take up to one year. The RA recruitment and selection process varies among regions; however, it always involves Congressional Delegations for states in the respective regions. In the absence of a permanent RA, the DRA typically serves as Acting RA. The career Regional workforce range in size across the regions, from 477 employees in Region 7 to 981 employees in Region 5. The Regional offices were reorganized in 2019 to mirror the Headquarters organizational structure and streamline internal and external communications.

Most of the agency's statutory oversight and implementation work takes place in regional offices that work closely with states and tribes. Regions work with state partners on state implementation plans designed to attain and maintain health-based air quality standards and water quality standards; air, water and waste permit programs; and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act hazardous waste site cleanups. Regional staff routinely undertake field sampling, conduct inspections and collect data for analysis to aid in implementing decisions. Much of EPA's enforcement work, from investigation through case negotiation and final settlements (injunctive relief and civil penalties) also occurs in the Regions. Examples of recent regional decisions made in coordination with HQ include Fairbanks Air Quality Plan for Particulate Matter; approval for Wyoming to implement the Underground Injection Control program for Class VI wells; and the Superfund cleanup decision for the Anaconda Smelter site in Montana.

Regional offices are the face of EPA for the public, as well as the agency's eyes and ears on the ground. The RA and DRA are charged with maintaining robust relationships with local, state, and tribal governments (environment, public health, agriculture, and oil and gas agencies), partners and stakeholders. Also, in close coordination with the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations (OCIR), RAs often interact directly with members of Congress and their staff, both in Washington, D.C. and in the Members' home districts.

Regional staff are the agency's points of contact for regulatory matters affecting stakeholders in their Regions. They are also our ambassadors for key programs like environmental justice and community-based work, voluntary programs (e.g., Energy Star, Water Sense), as well as cross-cutting and cross-media work.

Regions notify HQ of emerging and sensitive issues, such as PFAS and lead in drinking water. They are usually first to learn of these issues and formulate responses. The agency's primary emergency responders, the On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs), are based in the Regions. They provide the experienced network to provide support during events such as the Superbowl and similar national scale events, and to respond to regional incidents. Examples of major incidents include hurricanes in the southeastern states and the wildfires in the west. For larger incidents, multiple Regions may deploy OSCs.

¹ See OMS Transition Paper on Agency Facilities.

Given the size and diversity of the country, local needs and national consistency can create tension that demands close coordination and communication between Regions and HQ. Regularly scheduled calls and face-to-face meetings with Regional and Headquarters counterparts are common at all levels of management and the staff level to ensure this important coordination and communication occurs. Regularly occurring RA, DRA, and Mission Support Directors (MSD)² calls, regular calls and meetings between the HQ National Program Managers (NPMs) and the Regional program directors, and regular communication among the Lab Services and Applied Sciences Divisions (LSASDs)³ are some examples.

The agency's Lead Region System works to ensure the quality of agency decisions by providing an organized, consistent, and effective Regional role in all the major phases of agency decision-making. Regional offices are assigned as the "lead region" generally for two years, for a National Program Manager (NPM). Lead regions are responsible for coordinating with the other nine regions on specific matters to identify and synthesize the viewpoints of all 10 Regions into a "Regional view" that can be effectively factored into agency decision-making. Regional staff also participate in the agency's regulatory development process, providing on-the-ground experience that increases the rules' effectiveness. The FY20/21 Lead Regions by NPM can be found [here](#).

NPMs provide staff and funding to Regions to implement the national programs. The NPMs set program direction for the Regions through biennially updated National Program Guidance (NPG), which contains specific activity and other program goals. The NPMs work with the regions and OCFO throughout the budget process to establish the allocations for program funding.

In addition to the national laboratories operated by ORD⁴ and the NPMs⁵, each Region has a laboratory which provides a wide range of analytical services to the Regions' air, water, pesticide, toxics, hazardous waste and enforcement programs, which are also managed by ORD. In keeping with the agency's commitment to EPA-State partnerships, the geographically distributed system of 10 Regional labs directly supports the building of environmental monitoring and measurement capacity in state, local, and tribal governments. Regional laboratories are expert in the translation of agency requirements into practical protocols which can be adopted by the state agencies and local governments. To many in state and local government, the regional laboratories are the agency's sole technical arm.

Each Region also has a Regional Counsel (RC), which is a Senior Executive Service (SES) career position. The RC serves as the principal legal advisor to the RA and program managers and manages an office of attorneys. Each RC supervises: 1) attorneys who provide legal advice to managers and legal representation for defensive litigation arising from Regional matters, in consultation with OGC; and 2) enforcement attorneys with responsibility for enforcement policy and legal representation for Regional enforcement matters, in consultation with OECA. RCs report equally to the Assistant Administrator of OECA and the General Counsel. Most of the FTE and accompanying salary dollars for the RCs are provided by OECA and OGC.

² MSDs are responsible for administrative functions within the region (e.g., Budget, HR, IT, acquisitions and facilities).

³ RS&T Directors provide applied science services and expertise.

⁴ Research and Development Laboratories have primary responsibility for developing knowledge, assessments, and scientific tools that underpin decisions about EPA's protective standards, risk assessments, and risk management decisions.

⁵ National Program Laboratories have primary responsibility for implementing legislative mandates to develop and provide specific programs that support decisions for regulations, compliance, and enforcement at a national level.